

Town Meeting



BULLETIN OF AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING OF THE AIR

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U. S. Pat. Off.

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European Youth Looks at America

Moderator, JOHN MacVANE

Speakers

REZIA SCOTTI

MARGARETTA BROGREN

HELEN KORLETI

AUDREY FLEMING

Guest Historian—HENRY COMMAGER



COMING

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Our American Freedoms

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The account of the meeting reported in this Bulletin was transcribed from recordings made of the actual broadcast and represents the exact content of the meeting as nearly as such mechanism permits. The publishers and printer are not responsible for the statements of the speakers or the points of views presented.

THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

AUDREY ANN FLEMING of Great Britain. A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Miss Fleming, aged 17, was graduated from the Riverside Senior Secondary School. This fall she will enter Glasgow University and work toward a degree in teaching and the social sciences.

She has been in the British Girl Guide movement for eight years and as a Ranger has been especially interested in working with children in hospitals. Last summer she attended the World International Camp in Beaconsfield where nearly 5,000 scouts and guides from thirty-two countries were present.

Her hobby is corresponding with people in other countries. Her interest in international affairs is also borne out by being chairman of a Junior United Nations Club.

HELEN KORLETI of Greece. Eighteen-year-old Helen Korleti lives in Thessalonika, Greece. Her ambition is to be a nurse next year and she hopes to study in this country at Northwestern University. Miss Korleti says her hobby is "animals—especially horses and dogs" and she would like to make a hobby of traveling. She now has a large collection of post cards, photos and other material on foreign countries.

As a member of the Christian Ethics Club she has helped in work among poor families. Last year her class in school adopted one of Greece's war-devastated villages, taking on the responsibility to provide its inhabitants with food and clothing.

ANNA MARGARETTA BROGREN of Sweden. Miss Brogren, now attending the Swedish equivalent of our junior college is majoring in foreign languages, but eventually would like to be a social worker. Aged 18, she has been in the Swedish Girl movement for ten years.

Sketching, skiing and "orienteering"—a new sport in which one uses a compass—are her favorite outside interests.

MARIA LUCREZIA SCOTTI of Italy. Miss Scotti attends the University of Florence where she is majoring in political science and languages. Her outside interests are music, skiing and swimming.

She has been in the Italian Girl Guide movement for nine years and

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European Youth Looks at America

Announcer:

In June of this year the largest international exchange program by the Girl Scouts of the United States of America was undertaken. This project was made possible through the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund maintained by voluntary contributions of American Girl Scouts. One part of the program enabled 43 Girl Scouts, Girl Guides, and Camp Counselors from Great Britain, Italy, Greece, and the Scandinavian countries to spend the summer visiting various sections of the United States.

Since its beginning in 1912, the Girl Scouts of the United States have played a leading role in promoting better understanding among young people of all nations. Over three million young women in 32 member countries in the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts are actively engaged in working for international and interracial understanding. Through projects that teach citizenship in their troops, the girls learn to be of service to others and to work together as a team for the general good of their local community. Now to preside as moderator for tonight's discussion here is ABC's radio news commentator, John MacVane.

Moderator MacVane:

Just about three months ago, four groups of Girl Scouts, Rangers of the Girl Guides to be exact, arrived in this country from Italy, from Greece, from the British Isles, from the Scandinavian countries and Finland. At the same time, parties of American Girl Scouts were going to Europe. The Girls from the other side of the Atlantic scattered in small groups over various sections of the United States.

They spent half their time living in the homes of American Girl Scouts; half the time they spent in Scout summer encampments. They went to dances and parties; they met American girls and boys and their mothers and fathers. They saw American families from the inside.

These girls of 17 and 18, in their various uniforms, are all part of the great sisterhood of scouting that exists everywhere in the world, at least the free world. Many things were new and amazing. Many impressions were good; some not quite so good. Now they are going back home. Some will soon be married; others working in some business or profession. But they will always have memories such as one can only experience when one is young and sees a new land for the first time.

While the memories and impressions are still fresh in their hearts and minds, we thought we would bring four of the girls to talk to our Town Meeting of the Air. They are Rezia Scotti from Florence, Italy, Helen Korleti who lives in Salonika, Greece, Margaretta Brogren from Uppsala, Sweden, and Audrey Fleming, a lassie from the bonny banks of Clyde in Glasgow, Scotland. What they have seen here has brought some questions to their minds, and to answer the questions as best he can we have a distinguished American historian, Professor Henry Steele Commager, of Columbia University.

Professor Commager took his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Chicago and Copenhagen University in Denmark. Twice he lectured on American History as visiting professor at Cambridge University and Ox-

ford University in England; also Uppsala University of Sweden. During the war, he worked with the War Department in the Office of War Information. Among other professional duties, he is editor of a 40-volume work now in progress entitled *The Rise of the American Nation*. And now I think we will begin with Rezia Scotti of Italy. What are your chief impressions of this Scout visit to America, Rezia?

Miss Scotti:

After having spent three months in the U. S. A., we feel something in us that gives us joy. We made new friends! We made one more step toward international friendship and peace. Americans are quite different, though, in many ways. They are not too materialistic at all, as we thought before coming over, and they are not money conscious either. We never met people more generous and friendly—they make a guest feel perfectly at home a few minutes after they meet her. They seem to enjoy being our hosts as much as we enjoy being their guests.

In comparison of our Italian culture, Americans seem to know much more about social life than we do, and to be more prepared for it than we are. When an Italian girl graduates from high school, she will have done eight years of Latin and five years of Greek, and most probably she will have enjoyed it, but she won't have had any time at all to devote to her favorite subject, and that's why almost all of us, when we leave school, don't know what we are going to be, and don't like to go to college.

But an American girl will probably know how to play an instrument, or how to typewrite, or how to drive a car, in a word,

how to act in every-day life. And, since her first years of school, she has probably had a chance to choose her favorite subjects, she most likely knows what's the best way to follow for her. That's why our ideals and their ideals are sometimes very different—they *know*, and we haven't made up our minds yet!

HAVING had this wonderful chance to live for three months with American girls, we can say now that our manners are the same but we have been educated in a different way, maybe an old-fashioned way. We dance and behave at a party in the same way, but we Italians are not as free as they are, or, as many older people say, as they want to seem. We don't wear lipstick when so young, and we don't date with boys until we are 18. This surprised our friends very much, and maybe it needs some explanation. We meet boys and we dance with them, but we don't go out, one girl and one boy together, more than three or four times, because people think then that we are engaged. And also we like it better to meet in a group—we think it's more fun.

We certainly don't go out with boys in the evening after dinner, unless it's a big party or a dance. We also find that American youth is as interested as we are in world affairs, but we didn't have almost any chance at all to talk about that. We also met press people and talked on radio and television several times. We enjoyed these programs a lot because they are informal and pleasant, and don't scare you at all as soon as you get used to them. I could speak for hours about my wonderful vacation, but I think the rest of the team wants to ask some questions. I just want to say "arrivederci" to this beautiful country, and that

means I am sure I'll come back sometimes! (*Applause*)

Mr. MacVane: Thank you very much. Now I think we will hear from Helen Korleti of Salonika, Greece.

Miss Korleti:

We are very grateful to those who contributed to the Juliette Low World Friendship Fund because it made it possible for us to take this wonderful trip to the U.S. When we learned that we were coming to this country we couldn't believe it because it was something beyond our imagination, but our flight from Athens to Paris first, and then while on the ship our meeting with all the other Girl Guides from all over Europe made it seem real instead of a dream. We had seen pictures of New York harbor and the Statue of Liberty but seeing it there before us, really we could not help saying, "at last, this is America!"

During our trip and stay in the U.S. we learned how to live with people from different nations and understand them. We also found out that people are basically the same all over the world, and if such exchanges of young people take place often, we believe that very soon the world will be happy and peaceful. The way that the Americans conserve their natural resources impressed us very much, and we plan to start something similar in our country when we go back. The way the members in the family work together in many things was something we like very much because wherever people work happily together, much more is produced.

Coming in contact with young people, we found out that our ideals are almost the same. We are all trying to reach something.

We found out that we differ in manners. Young Americans speak much more freely with elders than we do, and their whole life is much more free than ours.

As far as youth is concerned, we think that young boys and girls are quite interested in world affairs, because they seem to know what is going on all over the world.

We were impressed by the advertising that is done over the American radio and T.V. We think that advertisements play a very important role in this country. The Greeks are famous for their hospitality, but the hospitality we found in this country is something we didn't expect. It was fascinating the way people treated us everywhere we went and we are thankful for that.

Camping in the U.S. taught us a lot of things which we are going to take back to our country and improve our camps. We really enjoyed our trip very much and got as much as possible out of it. We made many new friends whom we will never forget, and since real good friends are needed all over the world today, we will try to be as good friends as possible. Ending, on behalf of the Greek Team, I want to express our thanks to everybody once more for everything that has been done for us. (*Applause*)

Mr. MacVane: Thank you. And now from Sweden, Margareta Brogren.

Margareta Brogren:

Our whole time here in the USA has been full of experiences. We have seen so many things that are different from what we have in our home countries. We have had the opportunity to meet American youth in camp and in their homes. There are so many small things

that together form the picture of our American summer. We have learned a variety of things about American people and their way of life.

We were expecting the Americans to be very materialistic and money conscious but we have found that at least among the youth, they are not. However, the economic differences seem to make people more conscious of money and materialistic, especially in regard to cars and T.V. sets.

The American culture is very young compared with the European. A hundred years does not seem as old for us as to American people. We were very surprised not to find more legitimate theaters in the part of the USA that we have been visiting, nor did we find as much interest in literature and art. Our average home has a greater collection of books and paintings of well-known masters. But the American people are a singing people! They love all kinds of music.

The ideals are about the same among young people in our countries. However, we expected the American youth to be more interested in movie stars than they are.

After the wars, juvenile delinquency increased over the whole world and our countries are no exceptions. It takes different forms in our various countries. There seems to be more vandalism here. We have more what we call car-borrowing because our youth don't have cars available.

The American youth are less formal and more free in their relationships with adults. It's a custom in our countries to show respect to our elders. For example, curtsying and making a bow when you meet them, but even so our young people have as much free-

dom as you have. However, we entertain ourselves more than you in our homes instead of out in the community.

It is not so common to go to universities and colleges in the Scandinavian countries as we must pass examinations before going there, and our last years in high school are more like your first years in college. We have no liberal arts. We must specialize from the first beginning.

American people are very interested in international affairs and you are studying political science earlier in your schools, but I think we have this interest in common.

We have enjoyed meeting representatives of the press, radio and television, but we don't like the American advertising. Our radio is owned by the government and we have to pay a tax for our radios.

Our experiences here have made us feel that the world is not so large, and the people not so different. (*Applause*)

Mr. MacVane: Thank you, Margaretta. Now our wee Scotch lassie, Audrey Fleming.

Audrey Fleming:

When the preparations for this broadcast were being made, we were asked a number of questions, with a view to finding out what impressions our stay in America had made on us, and although at the moment our impressions are a little confused, we have tried to come to some kind of agreement in our answers.

First, are Americans too materialistic? Well, the average man here seems to be better off than his British counterpart, at least in the South. He expects his home to have such up-to-date gadgets as T.V., refrigeration, etc., but the pride he takes in these things is

a generous one, as we have seen by the way we have been accepted into such homes this summer.

During our stay, however, our main contact has been with young people like ourselves, and here, we have found much that is different, and a lot that is alike, for instance, the different attitude toward going to college. In this country, the vital question is not "Shall I attend college?" but "Which college will I go to?" as almost everyone we have met intends to study at one college or another. In Britain, no pupil with the necessary qualifications has financial worries about University. There are scholarships, bursaries, etc., but the intense competition makes entrance difficult, even although, as more than 50 per cent of our pupils leave school at 15, only those who intend to enter some profession try for entrance.

The young people themselves are much more at ease with others than our own teen-agers, and we find the boys, in particular, very courteous, and less awkward than our own boys. We have also discovered that the girls seem physically older than us, in that they "date," use make-up, and have what we call "clothes sense" earlier, but we do think that the British teen-ager matures mentally at an earlier age. This applies particularly to the girls who don't seem to have our interest in world affairs.

As to our judgment of juvenile delinquency over here—we just can't answer, not having met any hardened criminals! From magazines and books, though, this world-wide aftermath of war seems to have hit the U.S. in the same way as in other countries.

Other novel things, like food, climate, and new ways of life, have impressed us—including the

strangeness of commercial T.V. and radio. Although at first some of the advertisements amused us, we soon became annoyed at the frequent interruptions to the programs. I don't think we could get used to that at home.

These have been just a few of the striking things in this wonderful trip, but we do feel that the best impression will be what remains in our minds after we have been home in Britain for a few months. Any differences have been superficial and the similarities are far greater. The absolutely wonderful hospitality and generosity of the American people is something we will never ever forget. If only more people had the chance to do as we have done this summer, I think the world situation might be understood a bit more readily by everyone concerned. (*Applause*)

Mr. MacVane: Thank you, Audrey. Well, Professor Commager, you have a pretty varied bouquet of impressions here to comment on. What would you care to say about them?

Professor Commager: I think the first and inevitable comment is our astonishment at the proficiency in English, or in American, from the representatives of Italy and Greece and Sweden. You see I excluded Audrey who made no concession in the English or American language in her observations. It would have been very difficult, I think, to find an equal number of American Girl Scouts proficient in a foreign language. The second is almost equally inevitable and that is a comment on the astuteness and perspicacity of these observations. It would be a very encouraging thing if all European visitors who come over here, and customarily write books about us, had the intelligence and penetration that these girls have shown.

It is very gratifying to know that they have seen this country and come to know it. On the whole, their opinion is a very favorable one. What they say confirms the conviction which I have long held, that if we could only come to know each other on an intimate family level, rather than through formal economic or diplomatic relationships, many of the misunderstandings that plague us would vanish. But I noticed, as you doubtless did, that much the same things seem to interest all of you and much the same things seem to puzzle you.

You are all impressed by the size and beauty and variety of the country, by American hospitality, by the differences in the patterns of relations, for example in relation of children to their parents or the young to elders, in the differences in the educational patterns. You are puzzled by these to some degree. You are puzzled rather more by our radio, our movies, by the speed of life, by advertising. Many of us are puzzled by those things; so you haven't any monopoly on that.

I am struck too by one omission in all these comments, that there was no comment on anything remotely connected with politics, which is rather an interesting thing. Before you come through with these questions, which you have already talked about in your discussions here, I want to make one very general observation which probably won't do much good.

That is this. I want to remind you that America is a very large country. It is as large as Europe; it has as many sections as Europe has nations; it has a population as heterogeneous as the European, as many races, nationalities, linguistic stocks, and even more religious denominations and faiths. It is just

as difficult to generalize about the United States or American society as it is to generalize about Europe, so that you must not expect easy answers to questions about America as a whole. America is a very different and varied country.

Mr. MacVane: Well, let's see these girls put you on the griddle, Professor. Rezia, what would you like to ask the Professor?

Miss Scotti: I would like to know, are the American parents glad for the freedom of their sons, or do they let them act like that because all youth is acting like that and they would be unhappy?

Professor Commager: Well, if I understand you, and I am not sure I do, then we are on the whole glad that our sons enjoy their freedom, and we believe that the only way to exercise freedom is to have early training in it. If the young people are to be prepared for the responsibilities of citizenship and the responsibilities of life they have to start out pretty early. We can't abruptly change over, let us say, at the age of 18 or 21. When you say let them act like that, it is rather difficult to know what you mean. I do think on the whole Americans *act* more like that than they *are* like that.

Our actions are sometimes misleading. That is true of our adults as much as it is of our young people. It is true of our films, of our radio, of a great many other things; we are actually I believe rather more quiet or more modest people than one might suppose from public manifestations of activity.

Mr. MacVane: Rezia, the Professor said it was hard to generalize about this country. Could you tell us just what part of the country you did visit, what states? Perhaps we will have each of the girls do that so that we will get a bet-

ter idea of just where you got your impressions of the country.

Miss Scotti: I have been in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia.

Mr. MacVane: I see. Now Helen Korleti, would you tell us what question you have in mind and would you also tell us where you stayed, where you visited?

Miss Korleti: Well, we visited Rhinelander, Wisconsin, and Evanston, Illinois. My question is why are Americans so statistically obsessed?

Professor Commager: That is a very interesting and very shrewd question, though I would rather hesitate at the word obsessed. Americans have always been fascinated by statistics, partly because of the sheer size of America. We have, or think we have, the biggest, the largest, the most of almost anything, and have from the beginning taken great pride in size. Partly it is an additional consideration and that is again because America has been from the beginning a democratic society, so that what is to be *made* here is *made* by the average man and woman.

He likes to know how big his city is because he is part of making it. He likes to know that his skyscrapers are tall; he had something to do with putting them up. He likes to read in the newspaper that he produced more corn or more wheat than he did last year or than any other country did. That's *his* work. In a sense a democratic society, I think, customarily takes a great deal of pleasure, a great deal of satisfaction, in the obvious manifestations, the obvious proof, of its achievements, whereas the more aristocratic society, such as many Old World societies have been until recently, tend to include mere quantitative tests and to emphasize qualitative things

which belong to a comparatively small number of people.

Mr. MacVane: Margareta Brogren, where did you visit and would you give us your question?

Miss Brogren: We have been in Wichita, Kansas, and Denver, Colorado, and I would like to ask why do American movies give such a wrong impression of American life?

Professor Commager: That, Margareta, is what is called a leading question. I am not sure that they do give a wrong impression of American life. They give an enormously varied impression of American life. In one way, one very interesting way, it is fair to say that American movies give a more accurate picture of the life of a country than ever has been given in any form. That is in the pure physical. Almost every European, almost every British person, has a sense of how New York looks, of how the South looks, of how the West looks from the Western films, of how the American people themselves look, and how they dress, and how their kitchens look. In that sense, the impression is accurate enough.

As for the rest, of course films do not give, most of them do not give, an accurate picture or even a very fair picture because they are designed for romance. They are designed to take people away from reality. Whether that is wise or unwise is difficult to say. I think we tend to make a very unfair comparison, and that is, we compare the *best* of English films which come over here, or the best of French or the best of Italian or the best of Swedish, with the *average* run of American.

On the whole, our best don't necessarily get exported. When I was in Sweden, in your town, Mar-

garetta, I saw some very bad Swedish films, and when I was in England I saw some wretchedly bad English films. On the whole, they don't send those overseas, whereas the demand for American films is so insatiable that we have to send everything overseas.

Mr. MacVane: Why didn't you think that the films did give a true impression, Margaretta, I mean how did you think they went wrong?

Miss Brogren: In our movies we see the American upper class life, they are laughingly called the dollar kings, but we don't see the common life, and I would like to have more movies about the common life.

Mr. MacVane: That is the sort of life you have seen since you have been here.

Miss Brogren: Yes, the life we have seen.

Professor Commager: Yes, I suppose the average American knows the common life and wants to see something that doesn't exist.

Mr. MacVane: Audrey Fleming, where did you stay? You were down South somewhere, weren't you?

Miss Fleming: Yes, we stayed in Charleston, South Carolina, and in Gastonia, North Carolina.

Mr. MacVane: And what question have you for Professor Commager?

Miss Fleming: Well, we would like to know how the Negro situation in the North compares with the same situation in the South where we have seen it.

Professor Commager: That is a very difficult question, Audrey; it is a very large question. I know you don't want me to try to discuss the whole Negro problem in the United States. Let me make just one general observation, that

it is the opinion of almost everyone who has watched the South over the last 20 or 30 years that the Negro has made nothing less than spectacular progress in that section of the country.

Even so wise an observer as Gunnar Myrdal, who wrote the best book on this problem, a Swedish economist, Margaretta, has admitted that when he came back he was astonished at the change in the position of the Negro. I think what is happening here is progress by evolution rather than by revolution, an extraordinarily difficult situation.

Mr. MacVane: Each week we invite our listeners to submit questions on the topic to be discussed by the speakers. This week, Mrs. Pauline A. Murphy of Akron, Ohio, will receive an up-to-date twenty-volume set of the American People's Encyclopedia for sending us her question on tonight's subject. Mrs. Murphy's question is: "Do you think the young people of this country are serious-minded enough about their own individual futures and also that of the world in general?" It seemed to me that, listening to you girls, Margaretta had something about that in her own statement. Didn't you, Margaretta? Couldn't one of you answer for the group? Which one would like to answer?

Miss Brogren: I think Helen is better in answering this question.

Miss Korletti: Well, I think this is true.

Mr. MacVane: I think that is a good answer certainly. They are serious-minded enough about their own individual futures. And now I think we will have some questions from these European Girl Guides, Girl Scouts, who are in our audience. May we have our first question!

QUESTIONS, PLEASE!

Questioner: Yes, my name is Barbro Jonsson from Sweden, and I want to know why cars and television mean so much to American people.

Mr. MacVane: Dr. Commager?

Professor Commager: I think cars and television mean a great deal to all people, and I notice that some Europeans are very eager to get cars. The English certainly are. Very few of them as yet have television, but the demand for it is enormously strong. The demand for it in England is very strong. I am inclined to think that Americans are very normal in this matter.

There is, however, one other observation and that is that in a very large country, in a country where distances are enormous and in a country where people have for 200 years been in the habit of moving constantly, it is very natural to like fast cars and good cars. I think it is true that American trains, American cars, American planes generally tend to be unusually good. Whatever is involved in moving Americans around is pretty good, and Americans like them.

Mr. MacVane: What is our next question for the Doctor?

Questioner: My name is Lilian Tsimbouki, and I came from Athens, Greece. I want to ask, why is the State separated from the Church here in America?

Professor Commager: The State is separated from the Church for historical reasons, for practical reasons, and for philosophical or moral reasons. In the colonial period, State and Church were connected in several of the Ameri-

can colonies. What we had, however, was a large number of religious denominations — Episcopalians and Baptists and Presbyterians and many others, and it would have been impossible to have singled out one of these denominations and preferred it over the others.

The only practical solution when you have scores of religious faiths is to have *no connection* through Church and State. That is a historical reason and a practical reason. The philosophical reason is that Americans have always believed that religion and the Church should stand on its own feet, that religion should be voluntarily supported, and that any connection with a secular thing like the State was dangerous both to religion and the Church on one hand and to society and the State on the other.

Mr. MacVane: I might remind you young ladies who are asking questions that if Dr. Commager doesn't answer your questions as completely as you wish or if you want to argue with him, please go ahead. What is our next question?

Questioner: I am Marta Savina from Rome, Italy. My question is when the Americans think of Europe, do they think of it as another world, another whole nation, or do they consider the different countries with their different spirit?

Professor Commager: Here is precisely the kind of question which cannot be answered in generalization. There are a great many Americans and they think in very different ways about Europe. I think those who are of one or two generations removed from a particular country tend to

think of Europe in terms of particular countries—the Italian-Americans, and others. Those who have traveled a great deal abroad, or soldiers who served in the armies abroad, tend to think in terms of countries.

On the other hand, it is true that historically Americans have been inclined to regard the whole of Europe as the Old World. This sometimes includes Britain and sometimes not. Historically, the whole migration to America was an escape from the Old World, and Americans thought they were making a different kind of society and a different kind of government and tended, I think, to lump the whole of the Old World together.

What we have to do is to make careful distinctions between those Americans who in moments of stress will regard the Old World as a single thing, those Americans who remember the Old Country as Denmark or Germany or Italy, and those Americans who have traveled or who have studied and know how very different European countries are from each other and what distinctive individualities they all have.

Miss Savina: Thank you very much.

Mr. MacVane: And our next question?

Questioner: I am Rosemary White from Great Britain. What is the American opinion of the British social system?

Professor Commager: Here we are again. There is no one American opinion any more than there is one British social system. I think the one comment that can be made is that the British society is the least systematized of almost any. It is very far from a system at all. On the whole, I think Americans know rather more about

Britain, about England if you will, than the British know about America, even though you have the advantage of our films.

On the whole, I think there has for a long time been a closer connection from this side than from your side, partly because so many of us came from Britain originally, partly because almost all of us have been brought up on English literature in schools, partly because we have been brought up on English history and geography for that is not so common now. I think, on the whole, Americans are very sympathetic to the English society, or the social system, and I believe that most Americans who know anything about it have a good many reservations about the persistence of class society.

It was one of the early novelists who said that every Englishman is branded on the tongue with his class at birth. That is perhaps not as true as it was thirty or forty years ago, but that there are distinct class relationships and class distinctions in England that are not to be found in this country, is, I think, generally believed. I happen to think it is true.

I think, on the other hand, there is an immense admiration for the many aspects of England's society—for its homogeneity, for its unity, for the character of sweetness in the English social system and English people, or the British if you will, in the last hundred years or so. If there were to be a verdict, it would be overwhelmingly favorable.

Mr. MacVane: I think we have a question now from an American Girl Scout who has been traveling abroad, and it is probably for one of the girls. So you can take a rest for a moment, Dr. Commager.

Questioner: I am Nancy Potter from Scarborough, New York. I would like to ask Audrey Fleming, what do you feel that we young people of the world can do to further better world understanding?

Miss Fleming: Well, I think the first thing we ought to do is to take an interest in what is going on. In newspapers and radio, the general world news of today is fairly comprehensive, and if only every young person would read those things and digest them in an unbiased way, because I feel sometimes we have to be able to distinguish between what is purely sensationalism and what is genuine news. And if we can study those things and form our own sensible opinions, I think that is a great step toward understanding what is going on in the world.

Miss Potter: Thank you, Audrey, I am glad you said we.

Mr. MacVane: Our next question?

Questioner: I am Birthe Iversen from Denmark. I would like to ask you, why do United States schools not place more emphasis on language, when young people here wish to become conversant in more than the English language?

Professor Commager: I could give you three reasons, for what they're worth. One, that Americans feel, with some correctness, that English is a world language. That is certainly true when the American gets to Denmark or to Sweden, he gets along with English very well. Two, that American schools are so busy teaching so great many things that European schools don't teach that there is hardly room for emphasis on the language. Three, that in the past the American school systems have been developed and follow-

ing certain lines, one of the major tasks was to teach children, who knew only German or only Italian or only Polish, to teach them English, and the first task and one that kept schools at it a long time was to teach proficiency in English. There wasn't a great deal of time left over to teach other languages.

Mr. MacVane: Next question?

Questioner: I am Margaret Petropoulou from Greece and I want to ask, why doesn't the average American have the encyclopedic knowledge that the average European does?

Professor Commager: That again is a leading question. I very much doubt that the average European has the encyclopedic knowledge to which you refer. I think you are comparing probably a very learned, advanced student in Europe with an ordinary student in the United States. On the whole, it is my impression, for what it is worth, that most Americans know rather more about Europe than Europeans do about America, and as far as other knowledge is concerned American knowledge tends to go in the direction of skills.

As one of these girls so well remarked, Americans learn to drive cars. They learn to do a great many things that European children at the same age don't learn to do. They learn to adjust to their own world, to a very active life and a very active world, and this perhaps leaves less time for attaining knowledge. I do think that given two groups of students, the American would be somewhat later than the European. But by the time each group was 25 or 26, the American would catch up to the European in knowledge and understanding.

Mr. MacVane: We perhaps have

time for another question or two. What is the next one?

Questioner: I am Maddalena Giuntoli from Milan, Italy. I would like to know if when the Americans look for a job, does it help if they have majored in something or not? In Italy, you have to major if you want to find a good job.

Professor Commager: Yes, you are quite right. It does help to major in something over here, it helps to specialize in something. But on the whole, Americans believe that it is a good idea to have a general education before gaining a specialized education. And to give you a very brief and an adequate answer to that, America is sufficiently rich so we can afford to keep our children as children. We can afford to keep them in school rather longer than European societies can, and we therefore can, or think we can, afford to give

them what we call a general education through the college years and let them specialize after they are through college in what we call our graduate or professional schools.

Mr. MacVane: I think you mean that after we finish the liberal education, then we go on to engineering and medicine and . . .

Professor Commager: Yes. You see in European and British schools you go right into medicine or into engineering or whatever it is. In this country, you generally have three or four years of college first.

Mr. MacVane: Well, thanks to all of you for your most informative discussion. On behalf of Town Hall, we wish to express appreciation to the officers of the American Girl Scout organization and especially to Mrs. Dorothy Blackman and Miss Natalie Flatow.

THE SPEAKERS' COLUMN

(Continued from page 2)

served as assistant patrol leader of her troop. During the summer of 1950, Miss Scotti attended the International Girl Guide conference at Oxford, England. The following year she spent her Christmas holidays in Switzerland where she again met with girl scouts and guides from all over the world.

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER—Professor of History, Columbia University. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Henry Steele Commager completed his undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Chicago, taking a year off to attend the University of Copenhagen. In 1926 he began as an instructor of history at New York University, attaining a full professorship five years later. Since 1939 he has been at Columbia University, one of the notables on their history faculty. He has been a visiting professor at various universities in this country and in England where he lectured in American History at the University of Cambridge in 1942-43 and again in 1947-48.

During the last war he worked with the War Department and with the Office of War Information.

Besides his contributions to many periodicals, he has collaborated with others on a number of books in American History, and is Editor of a forty-volume work now in progress, entitled "The Rise of the American Nation."

FOR FURTHER STUDY OF THIS WEEK'S TOPIC

Background Questions

1. Where have you spent most of your time in the United States? In what way was it similar or different from your home?
2. What experiences most impressed you while staying in the United States?
3. What do you like and dislike about the United States and American life?
 - a. Are we too materialistic and money conscious? Or, do you admire our standard of living and material comforts?
 - b. What do you think of our culture? How do the ideals and aspirations of our young people compare with yours?
 - c. How do you feel about the importance of going to college? bettering your material conditions? being able to travel? dressing well? How do you feel about careers for women?
 - d. How do the manners of the young people here compare with yours? Does the youth of other nations have as much as or more freedom than ours?
 - e. How do American family relations compare with yours? How do relations between American boys and girls of your age compare with those in your country? Is "dating" as prevalent at home as it is here?
 - f. What do you think of American radio and television? press? motion pictures?
 - g. Is American youth more or less interested in world affairs than the youth of your country?

Has your impression of Americans and the United States changed since coming here? If so, in what way?

Do you think visiting other nations on the part of youth groups is helpful in promoting international understanding?

How does youth in your country regard the constant threat of war hanging over the world? Is it prepared to face life in a world of constant crisis?

To what extent do you think the United Nations should be a rallying point of youth?

Does youth in your country fear Americanism—the imposition of American values on the rest of the world?



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